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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2007

In Today's Papers

Peres, Abbas to Address Turkish Parliament

All papers report that on Monday, President Abdullah Gul held a joint news conference with visiting Israeli President Shimon Peres after the two leaders met at Cankaya Presidential Palace in Ankara. In response to a question about Iran's nuclear program, Gul stressed Turkey opposed any country in the region building weapons of mass destruction, although he said every country had the right to develop peaceful nuclear energy. Gul also said the remarks of Iranian President Ahmadinejad calling for the eradication of Israel were "mere rhetoric," and should not be taken seriously. Peres disagreed with Gul, stressing Iran sponsors terror in the region. Gul promised Peres it would work for the release of two Israeli soldiers held by Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas since last year, describing the issue as "humanitarian." Papers also report that in his meeting with the Israeli President, Gul asked Israel to open a representative office in Turkish Cyprus and launch ferry services between the Turkish north and the Israeli port city of Haifa. However, reports indicate that Peres declined to make commitments but promised to discuss the issue with the Israeli government.

On Tuesday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will join Gul and Peres at trilateral talks in Ankara. Peres and Abbas will then both address the Turkish Parliament. In his meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan later in the day, Peres said the meeting of the leaders of Israel and Palestine would only be possible in Turkey, the only country which has good relations with both sides. Peres, Abbas and Gul will also attend the signing of a framework accord on Tuesday for the establishment of an industrial zone in the West Bank in which Turkish firms will make investments under the "Ankara Forum" project initiated by Turkey in April 2005. Businessmen of the three countries will sign the accord which is expected to create jobs for 5,000 Palestinians.

Papers also note that the Ankara visits came just before a round of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks to be hosted by the US in Annapolis,

Maryland. On Monday, Peres said both sides must show pragmatism and determination at that meeting. According to papers, Peres rejected an appeal by Gul that Syria, too, should be invited to Annapolis, saying it was "not realistic."

Turkish Soldiers Released by the PKK Arrested

All papers report yesterday and today that the eight Turkish soldiers who had been abducted and later released by the PKK have been arrested by the military court in the eastern city of Van. The soldiers have been charged with disobeying orders. The soldiers were released with a written protocol two weeks ago to a delegation that included three DTP MPs. The soldiers have faced criticism since their return and have been accused of aiding the PKK propaganda. The soldiers' lawyer will reportedly file objections against the arrest decision. A media ban has been placed on the court proceedings. In addition, three parliamentarians are under investigation. They are members of the pro-Kurdish DTP who traveled to northern Iraq to join the representatives of the northern Iraqi government in the handover of the soldiers.

DTP under Pressure from Legal Action

All papers report Ankara Chief Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation into Fatma Kurtulan, an MP from the pro-Kurdish DTP, after the press published the photograph of a woman it claimed to be her at a PKK camp. The prosecutor claims Kurtulan received training at PKK camps. At the same time, a case has been opened against the party's new leader Nurettin Demirtas who is accused of avoiding military service with forged medical reports. Demirtas, if found guilty, would face two to five years in prison before doing his military service. Demirtas rejected claims that the report was fake, saying he was ready to undergo medical controls once again.

Editorial Commentary on Pakistan, Saudi King Abdullah's Visit

ANKARA 00002761 002 OF 002

Akif Emre commented in the Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak (11/13): "If we try to name the crisis in Pakistan, we can easily name it as a "nuclear-political crisis." The most important factor in the struggle for power in Pakistan is who will control their nuclear weapons and how. The US, in the Middle East, while controlling all the energy resources in order to be more powerful in the military field, is, at the same time, clearing its path of any rivals. The US is declaring the problematic powers first as a 'threat' and then eradicating them fully. As an example, Saddam was announced as a threat first and then Iraq became ineffective in the system. In short, the US has high desires to take nuclear weapons away from Pakistan. The US needs Pakistan and an administration which won't hesitate to stand against its people on the path to countering terrorism. But the US needs a Pakistan without any nuclear powers. It won't be surprising if Pakistan, in the following days, is offered to be rescued from the chaotic situation if it hands its nuclear weapons to the US."

Mehmet Yilmaz commented in the mainstream Hurriyet (11/12):

"President of Turkish Republic Gul went to visit King Abdullah's hotel room in Ankara with an excuse that it was showing respect to the King's age and the friendship between the two countries. The Turkish Republic has certain protocol rules which were established years ago. Similar rules applied then and will continue to be applied in many places in the world. These rules are a must for the State to be called a State and cannot be changed due to the level of the relationship between the leaders. Someone should remind President Gul that the Turkish state was not established in a Bedouin tent and that the protocol rules of this state are highly important and cannot be left to some peoples' pro-Arab sentiments."

TV News:
NTV

Domestic News

- The outlawed PKK militants have kidnapped seven people including two state-sponsored village guards in Baskale in the eastern province of Van near the border with Iran.

- The Turkish General Staff (TGS) said Monday nine PKK militants surrendered to security forces in the southeastern province of Sirnak and northeastern province of Artvin.
- Istanbul Mayor Kadir Topbas said he plans to invest USD 15 billion in transport by 2012.
- The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) chief Kemal Dervis said Turkey needs to grow at least 7 percent a year.

International News

- Nine Palestinians were killed and more than 100 were wounded in Gaza Monday when a mass rally marking the third anniversary of the death of Yasser Arafat ended in fighting between Hamas and Fatah.
- A huge blaze has broken out in a disused warehouse in Waterden Road in east London, where extensive rebuilding is taking place for the 2012 Olympics.
- German Chancellor Merkel and French President Sarkozy have discussed the integration of immigrants at their meeting Monday.
- Around 20,000 people including radical civic groups clashed with police and paralyzed traffic across the nation against the Korea-US free trade agreement over the weekend.

WILSON